# Taxpayers criticise Welsh Labour’s £250k moth survey amid public service cuts



Taxpayers in Wales have expressed outrage over a £250,000 investment by the Welsh Labour government in a moth-counting initiative while public services face significant cuts. The program, dubbed 'Cryptic Creatures of the Creuddyn,' is a survey of moth populations in limestone habitats on Llandudno's Great Orme and nearby areas. It was awarded £248,348 from the Government’s Nature Networks Fund, which is administered by the Heritage Fund.

While proponents of the project argue that it will protect at-risk insect species, including the Horehound Plume micro-moth, critics have termed the expenditure 'ridiculous' particularly against the backdrop of rising living costs and diminishing public services. Louise Emery, a Tory councillor in Llandudno, voiced her frustrations, suggesting that the Welsh Government should prioritise funding for local authorities to enhance education and basic public amenities instead of investing in ecological surveys. "It's about priorities," she stated, expressing disbelief that funding for moth surveys could be justified when local councils are reportedly struggling to maintain essential services, such as public toilets and highways.

The funding for the moth project is part of a broader context of financial challenges confronting the Welsh Government. In December, a slew of cuts to public services was announced, affecting sectors as diverse as policing and flood risk management. Finance Minister Rebecca Evans attributed these cuts to a staggering £1.3 billion real-term reduction in the Welsh budget since 2021, compounded by high inflation and growing demands on services, particularly the NHS. The cuts thereby reflect a difficult balancing act between environmental initiatives and the urgent needs of public infrastructure.

Furthermore, in an earlier announcement, the Welsh Government outlined plans to reduce budgets across most departments to maintain health services and the rail system. These measures were rendered necessary due to an estimated £600 million budget shortfall for the current fiscal year. As part of a broader strategy, the government proposed transferring funds from its capital budget to its revenue budget, an unprecedented move aimed at alleviating the financial strains on essential services.

Despite criticism, supporters of conservation initiatives argue that protecting biodiversity is vital for ecological balance. The Nature Networks Fund, established in 2021, aims to improve the condition and resilience of Wales' networks of protected landscapes, aligning with the Global Biodiversity Framework's objective to safeguard 30% of the planet's biodiversity by 2030. Projects like 'Cryptic Creatures of the Creuddyn' are designed to gather data that could inform future habitat management strategies, potentially benefiting not just invertebrates but a diverse range of species reliant on healthy ecosystems.

Moreover, the recent scrutiny of the Labour government's spending habits intensifies the debate. A report revealed that officials racked up nearly £1.5 million in expenses on luxury dining and travel within a year, which raised eyebrows amid ongoing austerity measures. Such details compounded concerns regarding the government's commitment to its constituents during a time of financial hardship.

In light of these developments, the question remains: how will the Welsh Government balance ecological initiatives with the pressing needs of its citizens? As the debate continues, the outcome of these conservation projects will be closely monitored, scrutinising their significance against a backdrop of shrinking public services and rising demands for accountability from elected officials.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2. Paragraphs 3, 4
3. Paragraphs 3, 4
4. Paragraph 5
5. Paragraph 5
6. Paragraph 5
7. Paragraph 5

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14740461/Welsh-Labour-government-count-MOTHS-cuts-public-services.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/dec/19/wales-government-announces-raft-of-cuts-to-public-services> - In December 2023, the Welsh government announced significant cuts to public services, including areas such as policing, flood risk management, culture, and sport. These measures were part of an effort to protect the NHS and support local councils. Finance Minister Rebecca Evans stated that protecting the NHS and frontline services was central to the 2024-25 draft budget. The cuts were attributed to high inflation and a £1.3 billion real-term reduction in Wales's overall budget since 2021. The government also considered increasing charges for NHS dental care, university tuition fees, and home care for the elderly. Additionally, business rate relief for pubs, restaurants, and shops was set to decrease from 75% to 40%.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/oct/17/welsh-government-will-cut-budgets-to-maintain-health-and-rail-services> - In October 2023, the Welsh government announced wide-ranging cuts across almost all departments to support the health service and rail system. The Labour-led government faced a £600 million shortfall in its 2023/24 budget, blaming inflation, public sector pay rises, and UK government mismanagement. An extra £425 million was allocated to health and social services to maintain current levels, not to introduce new services. The climate change budget, which includes transport, was boosted by £83 million, primarily to support the rail system. This resulted in approximately £220 million in reductions to other departments, including education, economy, and rural affairs. The government also sought permission from the UK Treasury to transfer up to £200 million from its capital budget to its revenue budget, a move it had never undertaken before.
4. <https://butterfly-conservation.org/news-and-blog/butterfly-conservation-awarded-ps250000-to-help-beautiful-bog-butterfly-in-wales> - In January 2025, Butterfly Conservation was awarded £249,995 by the Welsh government as part of its Nature Networks Fund to support the rare Large Heath butterfly in Wales. The project aims to research conservation methods beneficial to the species on peat bogs. The Large Heath butterfly has declined dramatically in England and Wales over the past century due to habitat loss. The project will employ a full-time officer to lead the research, recruit and train new volunteers, and raise awareness about the species. The funding is part of a broader initiative to improve the condition and resilience of Wales' network of protected land and marine sites.
5. <https://www.gov.wales/10m-boost-welsh-nature-projects> - In March 2025, the Welsh government announced a £10 million investment in thirteen nature conservation projects across Wales. These initiatives aim to protect species like the curlew, restore woodland habitats, and safeguard important fish species. The funding also supports community engagement through the building of a Nature Recovery Education Centre and training for volunteers. Deputy First Minister Huw Irranca-Davies emphasized the commitment to protecting Wales's natural heritage and empowering communities to become stewards of their local environments. The Nature Networks Fund is a key component of the Nature Network Programme, launched in 2021, which aligns with the Global Biodiversity Framework's '30 by 30' goal to protect 30% of the planet's land, freshwater, and seas by 2030.
6. <https://www.gov.wales/dolphins-voles-bumble-bees-and-salmon-all-set-benefit-82-million-welsh-government-nature-boost> - In March 2024, the Welsh government announced £8.2 million in funding for thirty-nine nature conservation projects across Wales. These projects aim to investigate various species and habitats, including studying dolphin diets off the west coast and reintroducing voles to Newport wetlands. The funding is part of the Nature Network Fund, a key component of the Nature Network Programme launched in 2021. This initiative supports the Global Biodiversity Framework's '30 by 30' goal, aiming to protect and effectively manage 30% of the planet’s marine, freshwater, and terrestrial environments by 2030. The fund is delivered in partnership with The National Lottery Heritage Fund and Natural Resources Wales.
7. <https://www.gov.wales/11m-conservation-projects-help-wales-endangered-wildlife> - In April 2023, the Welsh government announced nearly £11 million in funding for nine large and seventeen medium conservation projects aimed at curbing the decline of Wales' wildlife. These projects focus on strengthening the resilience of Wales' seas, forests, and disappearing grasslands, home to species like the curlew, otter, and bottlenose dolphin. The funding is part of the Nature Networks Programme, which seeks to build 'wildlife corridors' throughout Wales and engage local communities in nature conservation efforts. Minister for Climate Change Julie James emphasized the importance of protecting the environment for future generations and the need for a 'Team Wales' approach to tackle the global nature emergency.